

STENNIS SPACE CENTER

HISTORY PROJECT

THE MISSISSIPPI ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

of

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

Volume 482

1991

AN ORAL HISTORY

with

Mr. Leo W. Seal Jr.

Interviewer: Dr. Henry Dethloff

©1994

The University of Southern Mississippi

This transcription of an oral history by the Mississippi Oral History Program of the University of Southern Mississippi may not be reproduced or published in any form except that quotation of short excerpts of unrestricted transcripts and the associated tape recordings is permissible providing written consent is obtained from the Mississippi Oral History Committee. When literary rights have been retained by the interviewee, written permission must be obtained from both the Mississippi Oral History Program and the interviewee.

This oral history is a transcript of a taped conversation. The transcript was edited and punctuation added for readability and clarity. People who were interviewed may review the transcript before publication and are allowed to delete comments they made and to correct factual errors. Any additions to the original text are shown in the brackets []. Minor deletions are not noted. Original tapes and transcripts are on deposit in the McCain Library and Archives on the campus of The University of Southern Mississippi.

Mississippi Oral History Program
Southern Station, Box 5175
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-5175
(601) 266-4574

The Mississippi Oral History Program is under the policy direction of the Oral History Committee comprised of the following persons:

Dr. Aubrey K. Lucas
Dr. Ray Skates
Dr. John Gonzales
Dr. G. David Huffman
Dr. Glenn T. Harper
Dr. Robert T. van Aller
Dr. Neil McMillen
Dr. Kenneth G. McCarty

Dr. Charles Bolton, Program Director

Interviewer: Dr. Henry Dethloff

Editors: Shana Walton

Chris Joyner

Amendia Shoemake-Netto

Steve Patterson

Typists: Marie Sykes

Shelby Mayfield

BIOGRAPHY

Leo W. Seal Jr., a native of Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, is chairman and chief executive officer of Hancock Bank in Gulfport. He also serves as a member of the boards of directors for several area companies including the Bank of Wiggins, the Mississippi Power Company, the Mississippi Export Railroad, and Circle "S" Industries.

Mr. Seal's public service includes work at the local, state, and federal levels. He was the former chairman of the Hancock County Selective Service Board, served on the county's Democratic Executive Committee, and served on several task forces and councils, including the Economic Task Force, the Task Force on Taxation, the Emergency Council, and the Development and Promotion Council. Mr. Seal has also served on the Mississippi Economic Council and as state chairman of the Cancer Crusade and National Library Week. Locally, he's served on the Gulf Coast Mosquito Control Commission and the Regional Planning Commission.

In Gulfport, Mr. Seal has been involved and held leadership positions in several civic organizations including the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, the Jaycees, the Salvation Army, the Gridiron Club, and the Memorial Hospital Foundation. Also, he's been active in the Hancock and Mississippi Gulf Coast chambers of commerce, the Mississippi Deep Sea Fishing Rodeo, and Gulf Pines Girl Scout Council.

Special recognition and honors received by Mr. Seal include the Citizen of the Year, given by the Gulfport Rotary Club (1994). He was inducted into the Mississippi Business Hall of Fame by the Junior Achievement of Mississippi in 1992 and that same year received NASA's Public Service Medal and the Laurel Wreath Award for service contributions to the Gulf Coast. His alma mater, Mississippi State, has named him Alumnus of the Year (1983) and has given him the Distinguished American Award (1989). In 1993 he was recognized as one of the "Living Legends of the Southeastern Conference." Hancock County has recognized Mr. Seal by naming him its Outstanding Citizen (1979) and through the American Legion's Outstanding Service Award (1977). In 1983 Mr. Seal was chosen "King Neptune," which is the outstanding Gulf Coast citizen award.

Mr. Seal is married to Jane "Susie" Pringle Seal. They have twin sons, Lee and Leo III. He is also active member of the Methodist church.

AN ORAL HISTORY

with

MR. LEO W. SEAL JR.

This is an interview for the Stennis Space Center History Project in conjunction with The University of Southern Mississippi. The interview is with Leo W. Seal Jr. and is taking place on July 23, 1991, in Gulfport, Mississippi. The interviewer is Dr. Henry Dethloff. Also present is Mr. Mack Herring.

Dr. Dethloff: ---here and a little personal background.

Mr. Seal: I'm Leo Seal Jr. and I was born and raised in Bay St. Louis. I'm about sixty-seven years old, and I've been there about sixty of [those] sixty-seven years. I was [three and a half] years in the Army and about [four] years in college. [Most of] the rest of the time I've spent in Hancock County and Bay St. Louis.

My father was born and raised in Hancock County, so we qualify to be regarded as natives of the first water, I guess. (laughter) Both of us were in the banking business so we had a little bit more access to the general public than might have been the case if we had been in some other vocation.

I would say that when the announcement first came out as to what the general plan and concept was, the county met it [almost] with disbelief. In other words, the magnitude of what they were talking about, of coming in and taking a hundred and forty thousand acres, [was so foreign to the average Mississippian that] just the magnitude of the project was kind of difficult to comprehend. Those people who were not in the fee zone or the buffer zone were considerably more excited [about its impact], and that would spill over into Slidell and to New Orleans as well as the coastal counties and Pearl River and some of the other adjoining parishes and counties. And I don't want to imply when I make that statement that the folks who were in the buffer zone or the fee zone [and] stood the chance of losing their homesteads and [lands] were all opposed to it. In other words, there were the forward-thinking people, and the people who were interested in economic development and the development and growth of the area accepted it with open arms. I'd almost say [that] the older the folks were, the less enthusiastic they were about it. Of course, some of the people were just adamant over the fact that they stood to have to give up homesteads that had been in place for over a hundred years or so. On balance though, I would say that the news was received throughout the area with enthusiasm. However, I reemphasize again the magnitude of the project when it was first announced was just so huge that back in the early '60s it was difficult to comprehend, talking about spending the amount of money we were going to be spending there and building some of the stands and so forth that were to go in there.

Dr. Dethloff: How about yourself, what was your own reaction?

Mr. Seal: My own reaction was that---of course, I was about forty at the time---I welcomed it with open arms. I felt that it was a great opportunity for the area. For the economic benefits and for exposure to the outside world. As it turned out, the whole coastal area---and I would have to say that included the Slidell area and probably New Orleans, too---the economic base was enhanced and broadened significantly, more so than would have been the case if the missile program had not come in here. That I say and Mack can tell you, once that thing got started we had people from all over the United States coming in here. There were not only those identified with the space program, but vendors, contractors, congressmen and senators, governmental officials who were just looking into the matter. And then the people who came on board, General Electric, who did the housekeeping out there, and North American and Boeing, who [were] major employer[s]. I mean NASA was a segment of it, and I forget the name of the outfit that ran that big horn out there. Who was that?

Mr. Herring: Raytheon.

Mr. Seal: Well, there were a number of smaller contractors in there, but all these people, the vast majority of them had never been into South Mississippi and never would have been there, never would have come had it not been for this project. The fact that we've got a lot of them still living here, [which is] essentially thirty years after the beginning, tells a story in itself. But me being a young businessman coming up and having thought all my life about wanting to see the area grow and prosper and everything else, I was extremely excited and interested in the possibilities. And I would venture to say that most of the business people felt that way.

Now, what I was trying to say about the exposure and what it meant in the days that came after that. We were in the process of finalizing industrial parks across the Coast. I'm confident that we got some national firms in here in the '60s and '70s that were influenced to some degree by either having been here looking around or else having crossed the paths of people who had been here and they told them, [for] you know---at that time Mississippi was going through a horrendous period where the press was just beating the hell out of us.

Dr. Dethloff: I remember that.

Mr. Seal: When these people came into the area, they found out that we didn't sprout horns and we didn't all wear overalls and go barefooted. And all that was a very positive effect, particularly on this part of the state, but you might say the state-at-large to a degree.

Dr. Dethloff: Was there any sense at the time, you know, that [there was] really disaffection maybe with a large federal presence moving in as represented by the NASA?

Mr. Seal: No, I think the disaffection was more in the arena of those people having to give up their land and homes. And also there were some variations in the prices offered. That created

some problems. In other words, for example, if you had a piece of ground out there that---let's say ten acres of ground, and you had gone out there and plotted it into lots. Mack had ten acres next to you, and I had ten acres next to you, and we had not plotted it. They might give you four times what they gave us for the same piece of ground. And that created some real animosity.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes.

Mr. Seal: And the [appraisers'] justification of it [was that possibly] they were going to make a subdivision out of it and they had plotted them and would have sold it off in lots rather than acres, you would have gotten a lot more. Which is theoretically true. And actually true in the case of where the location might have been appropriate. And it depended on what appraiser you got, to some degree, as to how you might come out. In other words, if the three of us were to go look at a piece of property right now, we would have three different points of values, see. So, you had some of them who were extremely conservative, and you had some who were more liberal in their interpretation. And then, too, this stuff that went into litigation, essentially the same thing happened with the judge. Most of them were heard without it going to a jury trial, I mean [heard by] a judge. Some [were given] more liberal settlements than others. I would say that those people who had to give up their homes and didn't want to move and those people who didn't feel like they got enough for their land would have been head and shoulders above any other complaints that you might have encountered.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes.

Mr. Seal: It seemed to me like it was about seven hundred families affected in [that they] had to move out totally.

Mr. Herring: Sounds about right.

Dr. Dethloff: So, you feel like that was handled about as well as it could have been?

Mr. Seal: Under the circumstances, [for] the average person is resistant to change, [and there was no way to satisfy everyone].

Dr. Dethloff: Sure.

Mr. Seal: Just the idea of picking up stakes and moving to a new, even though it was in the county, a new location or the adjoining county and maybe giving up a rural area and moving into a more---

Dr. Dethloff: Urban area.

Mr. Seal: Urban area. That would be the biggest resistance you met. And when I say it was around seven hundred families involved---I forget what the population was in Hancock and Pearl River counties at the time---but proportionately that was in the sparsely settled area, so it wasn't nearly the impact that it would have been if it had been in Bay St. Louis proper or Picayune proper.

Dr. Dethloff: Right, sure.

Mr. Seal: You would have taken one of the whole cities out; they would have had an insurrection, see.

Dr. Dethloff: Oh, yes.

Mr. Seal: I think Senator Stennis, you would have to classify him as a statesman, maybe a statesmen's statesman. He very candidly broached the thing, but he went about it in a fashion that he tempered his approach. [Some people felt that if it had fallen for Sen.] Jim Eastland to do instead of John, it [might not] have come off nearly as smoothly because [many felt when one] had the occasion to deal with Mr. Jim, he was very gruff and very direct and very short spoken.

As a case in point, if you went to Washington---and I had to go many times with them and city and county officials and [others] to try and get the [funding] for the sewers and the highways and the schools and everything else that the impact that project brought---went into Senator Eastland's office and said, "Mr. Jim, we've come to talk with you, and this is what we need." He [might] say, "There ain't a Chinaman's chance; the conversation is over." Or he would say, "Well, we'll do it." And he'd pick the phone up and call somebody and say, "Do it." Now, John would say, "Well, we [may] have some problems with that; I can't assure you it's going to get worked out, but we are going to go after it and see what we can do."

Dr. Dethloff: So, he sort of nudged it into place. (laughter)

Mr. Seal: [After the initial announcement, Senator Stennis] began to get some static out of those people who didn't know what was going to happen. About all they had been told was, "You are going to have to move out." At the time, you know, it's difficult for a layman to envision a hundred and forty thousand acres. That's a hell of a lot of land. When you simply were told, "We are going to come down here and take a hundred and forty thousand acres," people who were not even going to be affected began to think, "Well, man, [if they are going to take] that much, they are going to come and take some of my stuff." [Also people were shocked over the thought] that this area had been picked for a project of this magnitude. [Then, too, at that time] the space program was [kind of] Buck Rogers stuff.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes, something totally alien to us.

Mr. Seal: Nobody [can go] to the moon, people thought. And it's a fact, today there are people in Hancock County right now that don't think [anyone] ever went to the moon. They don't think they ever went up there. Now, they are a distinct minority, but there are people that don't think they ever went up there. So I'm saying when they began to raise the roof off about what might happen, not knowing what [the proposed program entailed].

Stennis, of course, was more directly involved than Mr. Jim because of being on the Armed Forces and Appropriations [committees]. [So, with all the unrest among the people, he agreed to come down for a public meeting], which was at the old Logtown [school site], which was an eighth grade school at that time. [They] set up a flatbed truck out there, and several hundred people [came]. It was a hot Saturday afternoon as I recall it. People out there standing and fanning, some of them sitting, some of them griping. Some of them spreading rumors about how much they were going to get for their land in exorbitant numbers. How many jobs it was going to create. So you had a cross section of conversation taking place. Essentially all of it was rumors, from the ridiculous to the sublime. [My father, Leo Seal Sr., introduced Mr. Stennis as he, my father, was respected all over the county for his integrity and sincerity.] The senator got up there and told them essentially this: "The president has come to the Congress and said, 'We need to catch up with the Russians and we need to put a man on the moon, [and] in this decade.' This is a program that is new to all of us, and we think we can do it, but it's going to require the testing and so forth." And if my memory serves me right, [Stennis continued], "We have found that there is only seven places in the United States that this can be done in." The reason for that is that you had to have, besides access to the land and rail transportation, you had to have water transportation in order to get the [massive engines] on down to the Cape eventually. And at that time the space officials were laboring under the impression that the problems they were having in Huntsville, when they would fire smaller engines in Huntsville, they would blow out storefront windows and stuff like that occasionally. They got the idea that the mountainous terrain in the Huntsville area was probably causing that and that they needed to get into an area where it was relatively flat. And they had a good bit of vegetation and trees spread out to where the sound would defuse as it went through there, and that was why they wanted that besides the fee zone, the big buffer zone.

John got up there and explained to them that we ought to look upon this as a real plus. There isn't but seven places in the whole United States, and we went from the tip of the east coast where it touches Canada clean down the Atlantic Coast, across the Gulf, and up the Pacific, all the way to Canada again and [were] singled out as the place. Good publicity for the state of Mississippi, besides the impact that it will have on the area and the overall picture. So when he got through and he answered questions there for an hour or so, it defrocked a lot of wild rumors that had been circulating while the crowd was gathering and all of that. Of course, it gave license to some other rumors that started the next day. (laughter) Still and all, I think the point he made, you might say his closing statement was something to the effect, "Look, we are going to be a part of destiny in

getting someone to the moon for the first time." These are not the words he used but---"we've got an obligation and a responsibility to the country and to humanity. We've been picked out for this role; we need to accept that and go on from there." A lot of people got back and got to thinking, "Well, he's got a point when he's saying that." Again, I say those people who were out there who weren't going to lose any land were thinking about the opportunities this presented for economic development and growth in the area. They were very pleased with it.

[Next, the NASA] people began to come in. Bill Fortune, [a retired Navy captain], was the first one named to head up the [test site project]. But they had a guy named Marion Kent, who may have been the first [NASA] person down here. Is that about right?

Dr. Dethloff: I think you are right.

Mr. Seal: Marion Kent was a man out of Alabama, and he came in here, I guess for lack of a better word I would say as a sort of liaison man, PR man, not PR in the purest sense of the word, but to let the people have a person who was an authority and responsibility, who could start to answering questions and start finding what their thoughts and problems were and start moving down the road. And the [additional] people began to [move into] the towns, and like I [said earlier], they began to find out that we didn't sprout horns, we didn't wear overalls and go barefooted. When they named General Electric as the housekeeper, any number of General Electric people told me in the years that unfolded there was great trepidation on the part of their people in Philadelphia, [Phoenix, and elsewhere who came here].

Mr. Herring: Yes.

Mr. Seal: Somewhere out there in Arizona.

Mr. Herring: Yes, they came from Arizona, Philadelphia, Massachusetts.

Mr. Seal: There were two or three places they moved them primarily from. There was a great many of them that looked upon it with great trepidation when they told them what they were going to do. The number of people who came down and looked the place over and elected to stay---Bill Eaton, who was the first man to head the General Electric operation, later told me they had a higher percentage of people in the final analysis that accepted the opportunity to move here [that stayed] than they were experiencing in other parts of the country when they were trying to get them to move to other places. Now, that wasn't true the first month or two, but when the smoke finally cleared away, we had a lot of folks come in here that really loved the area that were with GE. Paul Sage and Chuck Steers, [Bill Roy, Gene Temple,] well, I could rattle off a whole bunch of them. Bill Roy might have been one of the first people here.

Mr. Herring: I think he was about the first.

Mr. Seal: With General Electric. He might have been the first with GE. Is he still living?

Mr. Herring: No, Bill passed away. But, you know, Bill Eaton lives in Texas.

Mr. Seal: [Bill Eaton is still alive. A fellow at] the bank went to an Army division reunion year before last and stumbled into Bill [Eaton], and [when Bill found] out he was [from Hancock Bank and I was still in the bank], Bill wrote me about a three-page typewritten letter.

Dr. Dethloff: Oh, really.

Mr. Herring: He's really kind of---I got a letter from Bill here. He's really---I think we put him on the mailing list for [National Space Technology Laboratories/Mississippi Test Facility]. He's kind of like an alumni.

Mr. Seal: Well, you know the first people in were, of course, NASA and GE and the contractors. They had some of the small operations that were in here too. As the thing began to come along, North American and Boeing came in. The Boeing people were real excited about the area. They had an operation out at Michoud as well as on the site. Made some lasting friends there. [Mack, did you know] John Covey died a year or so ago?

Mr. Herring: I had heard.

Mr. Seal: John headed up the Boeing operation with Bill Holmes. Bill is still down at Merritt Island, I think. John died a year or so ago, and Janet Balch told me, and I wrote Rosie and heard back from her. All those people got right in the mainstream of the community and civic life and made significant contributions to the welfare of the area and all. They were welcomed with open arms, and I think any of them you'd ask would tell you that, and I don't think you'd find many that [would speak badly about our area or their experiences here].

Dr. Dethloff: So, that assimilation came about pretty easily.

Mr. Seal: Yes. And the fact that all these changes were taking place was instrumental in a number of improvements in the communities, in the sewer and water and the streets, [schools, et cetera].

Dr. Dethloff: Did that tax pretty much the tax bases and the resources?

Mr. Seal: The communities put up their share, but they got some out of Washington too. And some out of the state of Mississippi.

Dr. Dethloff: They were pretty responsive to---

Mr. Seal: Had that not been done, it might have been ten to twenty years before we [would have gotten] it done so---

Dr. Dethloff: Bond issues passed pretty regularly?

Mr. Seal: Yes. It was, well, it was exciting times. One of the things that the natives were really impressed with, those that worked out on [the] site. Lord, they had several thousand people out there in construction. And at the peak of the [building phase, there were additions because of the] permanent people coming on board. But [one person], Dr. [Wernher] von Braun, was an unusual individual, the smartest rocket scientist in the world, and yet, to a degree, the guy was just as plain as an old shoe. It was not unusual at all to go out on a site and see him walking around kibitzing with the laborers and the machine operators and everything else. That gave them a tremendous thrill to think here the foremost space scientist in the world is out here talking to me like you and I are talking right now. So, all that played a part in having the general public accept readily what was unfolding out there. Now you can still find some old soreheads that had to move and they gripe about it. Again, as I said earlier, that [was] a distinct minority. By far it was the most exciting thing that has happened in Hancock County in my lifetime.

Dr. Dethloff: I think and I don't remember, that was the largest construction contract Mississippi had ever had. The largest expenditure.

Mr. Herring: Yes.

Dr. Dethloff: I'm not trying to poke into your banking business, but did you begin to feel immediately the influx of dollars into accounts and into the economy and sense a sort of vitality?

Mr. Seal: [Yes.] We immediately---when the program was announced, as soon as NASA got someone in there to run the show, who was Bill Fortune, [went to him to propose a bank branch for and on the site. It's still there.]

Dr. Dethloff: Could you tell me about Mr. Fortune, too? Any comments?

Mr. Seal: Well, Bill was a Navy captain – pretty affable individual. He was forward-thinking, and he was extremely anxious to project a NASA image in a favorable light and also to try and apprise the general public and particularly the business leaders and elected officials of what was taking place. On several occasions he brought James Webb in, who was head of the whole NASA program at the time, to come in and meet with ten or twenty business, political leaders, and just have a shirt-sleeve conversation with them. I remember I was out there one time, and

Mr. Webb pulled off his coat and had red suspenders on. (laughter) So, he made them feel right at home. But Bill was a very conscientious individual. He had a nice family. He moved into Pass Christian. You could get in his office without that much effort. I don't know whether NASA could have picked a better person to get the thing off the ground and rolling.

There was a problem out there initially. The Corps of Engineers was given the responsibility and the authority of acquiring the land and overseeing the construction. And NASA was the one that was going to use the stuff when they finished. [And] the Corps of Engineers are not known to be the most pliable people in the world [when you are trying to get them to respond to your suggestions or requests].

Dr. Dethloff: No, Johnson Space Center had the same --- (laughter).

Mr. Seal: There were several instances out there where, you know, it looked like the immovable object and irresistible force were coming together. Had Jack Balch been out there at that time, Lord, there ain't no telling what might have happened. Jack was a dynamic, strong-willed individual. Bill was much more diplomatic, and he might get mad as hell, but you weren't aware of it. He'd smooth things over.

You asked me about the bank. Well, about the time Bill got in there, we went out there and said to Bill, "You are out here in the middle of nowhere. The closest bank is about thirteen miles away in Picayune, and we're about nineteen miles away in Bay St. Louis. And we think we need to put a bank out here for you." Everybody was being paid by check, and they didn't have computers, they wouldn't credit your account and all. I forget how high those numbers got up, but we told him we wanted [to provide an on-site bank for them]. Then the first [question that] came up [was,] "Where are you going to do it? How are you going to do it? We can't let you have any of these houses out here because we are tearing them down." Stuff like that. [There was] an outfit up in Vicksburg, Mississippi, that made the biggest trailers that were being made in the country at that time. I went up there and told [them], "I want you to make us a bank that we can wheel down there and put in place. And it's possible [that], as the construction moves, we may have to move the thing. So, we want to keep it so we can roll it in there, and if we have to move it, we can roll it somewhere on the site." [They] had a standard house trailer at the time that, when you were moving it down the highway, it was twelve feet wide, but when you put it in place it folded out to thirty-six feet wide. It was the basic length of forty-eight feet, and he told me he could get me eight more feet [in length]. So, we got him to build us a trailer that was fifty-six by thirty-six. And we put, I think, half a dozen teller cages in there plus two drive-in windows and someone to make loans and open accounts and stuff like that.

The place was a quagmire out there when they first started with all the heavy equipment going in there, and a good bit of the area was lowlands and all that. You'd get a lot of rain. So we had to put, I don't know how much, clay gravel in there to where they could use the drive-in windows.

I don't know how long [we worked to get approval]. Bill was all for it, and everybody out there was all for it. [But] we never could get anyone to sign a piece of paper saying that we could go out there. So, after several months had passed, I went out there to see Bill one day, and I said, "You know, we are getting really raked over the coals because we announced some time back that we are going to put this bank out there and it isn't out there yet and people think it's a delay on our part. They are kicking hell out of us. Tell me what the problem is." And he said, "Well, there is no bank on any NASA installation in the United States, so there is no precedent, and nobody knows who can give the authority." So he said, "Nobody at NASA will take it upon themselves, and nobody in the Corps of Engineers will take it upon themselves." So I said, "Well, tell me what we need to do. Do we need to go to John Stennis and [ask] him what do we need to do to get this off dead center?" He said, "Well, give me another week and let's see what we can do." And about a week later he came and said, "OK, we are ready to go."

They had a fellow named Ed Ling out there, and if you haven't read Ed's book, it's a lot of interesting [history], trivia and so forth in there. There is a lot of individuals involved there, their character[istics] and all.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes, I saw the book.

Mr. Seal: He turned it over to Ed to work it out, and Ed came to me and said, "We can't let you go in there because it's a public area and we've got to accept bids." And I blew up. I told him, "We've been fooling with this thing for six months. Finally got around to where we've got to the major problems of getting it approved and everything else, and now you are going to tell me that people who haven't done a damn thing all this time are going to be able to come in and bid a few more dollars and get it." He said, "That's the way it is." So I went to Bill and told him, "This is a gross injustice." He said, "I'll agree with you on that." But he said, "Don't worry about it. It'll all work out." I said, "Well, I'll take you at your word." A week or so later it all worked out.

Dr. Dethloff: So the bids were taken.

Mr. Seal: What?

Dr. Dethloff: The bids were taken?

Mr. Seal: No.

Dr. Dethloff: Oh, OK. (laughter)

Mr. Seal: We put a bid in, but nobody else put a bid in.

Dr. Dethloff: Oh, OK.

Mr. Seal: But I was at a cocktail party several weeks later, and I asked Bill, "You were pretty confident when you told me, 'Don't worry about it, it's going to be taken care of.' " I said, "What did you do?" He said, "I went and told Ed Ling to tell anybody that came in that wanted to bid that they were Johnny-come-lately's trying to get in on your coattails. And if they got the bid, they were going to have more grief than they had ever experienced in their life." (laughter) So nobody else bid.

Dr. Dethloff: (laughter) Backed them off, yes. You stared them down.

Mr. Seal: But anyway, we got the thing in place.

Dr. Dethloff: Good.

Mr. Seal: Mack was out there; he can tell you it served a real purpose. Man, on payday we run them through there like croatin oil.

Mr. Herring: You couldn't get close to that bank, I tell you.

Dr. Dethloff: That's a good story.

Mr. Seal: We subsequently moved in to [Building 1100, the main headquarters building].

Dr. Dethloff: Part of that is dealing with the federal government, and that is a new kind of knowledge and expertise.

Mr. Seal: I should say something to you that I should have said thirty minutes ago, and that was when you asked me about the acceptance of a large government installation. We had experienced that in World War II in that Keesler Air Force Base was carved out of Biloxi. The Navy Seabee base was put here, both of which are still here. [What was] Gulfport [Army] Air Field is now probably the most prominent subdivision in the city of Gulfport. [Also, during World War II, a division of Merchant Marine Academy was located on the Bay of St. Louis at Henderson Point.]

Dr. Dethloff: That's a good point. So the federal presence was here and was familiar.

Mr. Seal: We had a bombing range in Hancock County.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes.

Mr. Seal: [It was out] about where Stennis Field is right now. [That's where the bombing range was.] I worked out there the summer [the range was put in]. Then we had K-9 dogs trained out here on Cat Island. So we [have] had experience [with government installations on the Coast]. But there was a lot of difference between having thousands of GIs in here, which were made up of every stripe of the population of the country, and the quality of people that came in with NASA. The people that came here with NASA were, for all practical purposes, educated. You go out there and look at the figures that Mack can give you on what the makeup is out there; the people have doctorate degrees and all that. It wasn't quite as one-sided [then] as it is now. But still and all the type people that came in were much higher [than the cosmopolitan makeup that made up the military forces in the 1940s].

Dr. Dethloff: Yes.

Mr. Seal: We had experienced that from starting in 1939 through [19]46, and so there was not much difficulty for the Coast to accept that.

Dr. Dethloff: Good.

Mr. Seal: Now, you take the Ingalls shipbuilding. It cranked up in '39 [to build ships].

Dr. Dethloff: They were doing the landing craft down here, weren't they?

Mr. Seal: Well, they were building mostly merchant vessels at the time. Let's see, they called them Victory ships, were one type they were building, and Liberty ships were another [and baby "flat-tops"]. That was basically what they built at Pascagoula. But you know Pascagoula had quite a few thousand people in there during that time.

Dr. Dethloff: They were big, yes.

Mr. Seal: So we didn't have---that was not a problem.

Dr. Dethloff: OK.

Mr. Seal: In particular, what you asked.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes, good. I'm glad you mentioned that. So you got your bank in, and people were---

Mr. Seal: Got the bank in. As the construction began to peak out, the actual people who were going to do the testing moved in. General Electric was in here long before then for housekeeping. They did a range of things. You know, when Boeing and North American came in they were

strictly to test. They had high quality in the electrical end. And everybody looked forward to the firing with trepidation because they didn't know what was going to happen when you lit off seven and a half million pounds of thrust out there [on the Boeing rocket engines].

Back to what I was trying to explain to you about the Huntsville situation: what they ultimately found out was that the trees and the flatlands had nothing to do with defusing the frequency of the sound. What was causing it was the atmospheric conditions [at Huntsville]. On certain days they would fire and it would be a brilliant, clear, sunshiny day, it might blow some windows out five or ten miles away. And they'd fire on another day under what appeared to be the same conditions and nothing would happen. Well, they found out these atmospheric conditions were existing, and sound rises, so as the frequency of the different blasts went off, it would go up and hit this atmosphere, and it went right back down.

Well, you heard me talk about this big horn they had out there. They came out there and constructed a horn as big as this room. It must have been twelve by twelve, wasn't it?

Mr. Herring: It was huge.

Mr. Seal: [It simulated the noise and frequency] the North American and Boeing engines made. I had a boy who had been through Mississippi State with me, that's why I know a little bit more about [the horn] than probably many did. Everyday they would go out there and blow that horn. They would move it on that swivel, and then they would send people five, ten to fifteen miles, twenty miles on out to see what the reaction was. That's when people would find that out. The media began to say that when the firings took place they didn't know what might happen, [that] it might destroy things in Biloxi [over] fifty miles away and all that. [However, in the end,] of all the firings that took place out there, very, very few times did it rattle windows. Sometimes it would shift the cups or the glasses that were on a shelf or stuff like that. They had a few spurious claims made against them. Mack could tell you more about that. I don't believe you ever had to pay anybody anything, did you?

Mr. Herring: I think it was about fifty over the whole period, but they were pretty minor.

Mr. Seal: So lots of times when they fired, you weren't even aware of it. There were times when they fired that you could hear it if you were [in Gulfport] or even in Biloxi. That was the exception rather than the rule.

It was inconceivable to try and describe the power that seven and a half million pounds of horsepower, the thrust that would generate, which is what the Boeing engine had. It fires for two minutes, maybe two minutes and thirty seconds. North American was about two and a half million, and it fired for six and a half minutes.

I was privileged to go down to four of the firings at the Cape. Those were tremendously exciting experiences. Two times I was down there when---brilliant, cloudless day---[you could see for] miles over there. Have you ever been down to the Cape?

Dr. Dethloff: No, I haven't. I'd like to do that.

Mr. Seal: See, they have the blockhouses down by the launch pads, but the public that was watching them was back two or three miles away from it. There was [a body of] water in between there. And when they cranked them babies up, they made a right smart sound, but you could see them go up and turn with the earth surface. On two of those firings you could still see them [burning] downrange fifty-eight miles with the naked eye. I mean they were [still] burning that far away. When the Boeing two-minute firing burnt out, [the engine was automatically cut loose]. You saw the space vehicle with the other engine on it [fire up] and [the ejected Boeing engine] just sort of hanging there in space. It would start falling and [then] gravity would burn it up.

Dr. Dethloff: And you've seen that?

Mr. Seal: I saw that. I saw two of those. Then I went down on the day lightning struck the thing. [It was an overcast day,] and they didn't have but about fifteen hundred foot [visibility]. [Where the NASA guests sat in the grandstands,] they had television sets, so besides looking out there two or three miles, you were looking [at two big TV sets to give you the view from the blockhouse]. [During the countdown,] they had a narration taking place from the countdown right on through what was happening. Well, [just after the thing went up and] out of sight there was a tremendous clap of thunder and [all sound went off]. Nobody knew what happened because you couldn't see [or hear anything]. It turned out that [lightning had hit the ship and] knocked all the electrical controls out; it knocked the [breaker] switches off. And the astronauts themselves [had to take over and] manually kept it going until they could get the switches back on. So there was a silence there. It might have been thirty seconds; it seemed like an hour. Nobody knew what in the world had taken place; they couldn't see. They knew something had gone wrong because here these guys were talking, and they went off the air after this tremendous [clap]. [Mack,] were you down there that day?

Mr. Herring: Yes.

Mr. Seal: I didn't know if you were out in the Pacific to catch it when it came in or not.

Mr. Herring: That was scary.

Mr. Seal: Then they began to have a dialogue between Mission Control and the astronauts. Everybody was wondering what happened, [was] the vehicle damaged, [was] the second stage going to light and all that stuff. As Mack said, that was some hairy five or six minutes after that,

boy. Anyway, whenever they had a firing at the Cape back then---I guess they still do it---but on the Apollo missions, whether you were back where the computers were or whether [launch personnel] were [back where the computers were], in the blockhouse or wherever you were, they locked up [those involved in the launch] and debriefed [them] for two hours or so. They didn't let [them] talk to anybody. They had to be debriefed as to what they saw on that---what do you call them things?

Dr. Dethloff: Monitors?

Mr. Herring: Monitors.

Mr. Seal: Com---well, anyway.

Dr. Dethloff: Comcap, or---

Mr. Seal: Anyway, everybody that had a job in the blockhouse [or the monitoring complex was] debriefed. [Everybody that had anything to do with the firing had to be debriefed. When they finished, everybody would celebrate the successful firing. I was staying at John Cully's house, (he ran the firing for Boeing) so I was privileged to attend two celebrations that followed, which brings to mind a funny story that John told after the first Apollo mission. Since the firing was handled by Launch Control Center, someone there had to push the button to fire up the engine to leave the pad.]

Mr. Herring: Launch Control Center up there?

Mr. Seal: [There must have been fifty consoles in the center, and after the last launch, Cully told the group who the guy was who "pushed the button." By the time the second one was ready, there had been so much hue and cry with everyone wanting to push the button that they had to put a button on every console so no one would know who actually fired the rocket. A man would stand behind each of the sets and tell him when he tapped him on the shoulder to push the button. At the appropriate time each would tap his console button, but only Cully knew who really fired the engine, but all the others thought they had.]

Dr. Dethloff: I'll be darn. That's a good story.

Mr. Seal: Cully was telling me about that. How they would almost get into the fighting stage over it.

Dr. Dethloff: I'll be, that's something.

Mr. Seal: [After lightning had struck the vehicle being launched, we all went back to Cully's house.] Of course, he and the rest of them had to get debriefed. He showed up back at the house about three or four hours after the firing. Bill Holmes was there with him. They were the two principal guys for Boeing, and they started getting phone calls from all around the world to Cully's house, second-guessing them and questioning them. "Why did you send the thing off? Didn't you realize those men could have been killed?" I remember the president of Boeing got on the phone, and John was on one phone and Bill was on the other. And they were trying to explain to this guy why they did it. He was chiding them pretty good. Cully had had a couple of drinks by then, and he got all he wanted out of that fellow, and he said, "Look, who had to make the decision to fire that damn thing or not, me or you?" He said, "Well, you did." He said, "Well, I fired it and it worked and there ain't any use doing all this acrimonious backbiting and second-guessing." And he said [to Bill Holmes], "Bill, you talk to him."

Dr. Dethloff: That kind of makes you feel like you were participating in all that.

Mr. Seal: Yes. Well, the next day I asked John, said, "John, I couldn't hear what was going on in the conversation with you and the phone because y'all were in the other room. I'd hear you holler every now and then when you'd get mad at somebody." They had calls out of Africa where they had monitoring stations. They'd call all the way to Florida and ask them, "What the hell did you send the damn thing up for." He said, "Well, let me explain it to you. If we didn't fire today, we had a time frame that that window is open for them to come back in. If we didn't fire today, we couldn't fire for thirty-one more days. Have you got any idea what the cost would be to sit here for thirty-one days with all the people we've got down here and the high price we're paying for these people and all that, with the chance of something going wrong and all that." He also said, "We [would have] had to unload that liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen." He said, "Don't let anybody tell you that there wasn't great danger when you start unloading that stuff. We could have blown half the Cape up." And he gives me three or four other reasons, but I remember those two reasons distinctly. He quoted the number of dollars it would have cost to put that firing off for thirty-one days – staggering.

Mr. Herring: It's expensive, it really is.

Mr. Seal: [When he] talked about unloading that liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen, that really puts the fear of God into you, too.

Dr. Dethloff: Let me ask you this, too: about this time everything seems to be working well. Now, '68, '69, '70, word begins to come out that this may not be around for very long. Do you remember that?

Mr. Seal: Yes, I remember that well. The general attitude on the Coast was, "John Stennis ain't going to let this happen."

Dr. Dethloff: OK.

Mr. Seal: In other words, they said, "My God, they couldn't have spent all the money they spent down here for a one-time deal and have it going down the drain." If John Stennis hadn't been [in the Senate, it's possible] the whole thing would have gone down the drain.

Mr. Herring: Yes, sure would have.

Mr. Seal: But it came down from five or six thousand people; I think there were five or six thousand people there at the peak. It got down to where---I don't know if they have twelve hundred people out there.

Mr. Herring: Eight hundred, I believe.

Mr. Seal: By that time all of the people out of North American and Boeing, GE and all, an awful lot of them had been living in this valley for five or six or seven years were having to leave here. Then it got real, real scary from an economic standpoint.

Dr. Dethloff: I was going to say, did you kind of get into a recession almost?

Mr. Seal: Well, let's say we didn't get into a recession because following World War II the Coast experienced a pretty good growth [through] the Eisenhower administration, real estate construction and all. And as I told you we were beginning to put these industrial parks in place. They began to come into being in the late '60s and early '70s, which brought stuff here that had never ever been here before. So the impact of the site [phasing down] was not as great as if that had not been in place, see. So while it affected the Picayune area dramatically, it did not affect the Coast here to the degree that it affected Picayune. But then John kept working at it, and Jack Balch, you got to give Jack Balch credit.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes, I wanted to ask you about Balch.

Mr. Seal: You've got to give Jack credit because he was a button-holing and haranguing and pulling on coattails of everybody he could get to. He didn't want to leave there, and he felt like he [and NASA were] breaking faith with the community if he did that because Jack had to do a lot of arm twisting and haranguing and all to get the Coast officials to put in some of those programs that they had put in: schools, water and sewer, gas, and streets and all that. Jack took that as a personal affront to him that he had gone out and told these people to do all this because it's going to be here from now on. When it started deteriorating, he kind of took it personally. Wouldn't you say that?

Mr. Herring: Yes, he did. He took it very personally.

Mr. Seal: So, he worked tirelessly at it and Stennis did, too. Finally the thing began to turn around and start heading back in the other direction. Of course there were no missile programs. NASA had no programs---

Mr. Herring: That was the big problem.

Mr. Seal: ---online following when they got to the moon. So it took several years to get that in place, to get [the shuttle] we [have] got out there now.

I was telling you about the firing at the Cape. I got down there for the last firing, which was the only one they fired at night. The thing was supposed to be fired somewhere around seven o'clock, [but there] was about a five-hour delay. It didn't fire until midnight. Of all the three I had been at, the noise level didn't even begin to approach what happened that night. Apparently it was the atmospheric conditions, but when that baby went off that night, people were running around covering up their ears. It was making such a different [sound] than there had ever been before. It must have been atmospheric conditions. The volume to me seemed to be from five to ten times as great as the previous firings. Then the other thing that was so fantastic was the flame that this seven and a half million pounds of thrust put out; [it] was so brilliant that you could see it downrange a long piece. Fifty-eight miles downrange [on a brilliant sunny day] you could see that two and a half million pound thrust thing. [That night, the illumination was so great] it must have lit up two hundred miles of south Florida.

Dr. Dethloff: Goodness gracious.

Mr. Seal: Like the sunlight. There were boats that used to come on both sides of the Cape when it fired. Thousands of boats would get out there and watch the firing. When that thing lit up, my God, you never saw so many boats in your life. From up on top of the stand [where I was], it looked---boy, anywhere you looked it was boats of all size, shape, types, and description. If you were privileged to see one of those firings, it was a once-in-a-lifetime experience. You would never ever forget.

Mack and [the NASA people] made a real diligent effort [all throughout the Apollo firings] to get a lot of people to have an opportunity to go down there and see it. I don't know how many hundreds of people y'all sent out of the area. All of that was very good PR. I think Mack will probably tell you that very few things that they asked for out there [at MTF of the state, cities or counties or] the public that they didn't come through with. It may not [have been] exactly the way they wanted it, [but something was done].

Dr. Dethloff: Sure. You have good community support.

Mr. Seal: [Mack Herring is] due credit for that.

Dr. Dethloff: Was there a sort of formal or informal association of a support group for Stennis?

Mr. Seal: Well, it depends on who was running the site out there. They had, out of necessity, certain key elected officials that they worked with constantly. And they had certain business people they worked with constantly. I don't know whether we did more than most of them, but they did call on us a good bit and still call on us for help in the Congress and various and sundry things. But there were other business people involved in that, too. I guess you'd have to say there was no formal arrangement, but there was a loose-knit, informal setup that existed between the people that ran the site and the community leaders.

Mr. Herring: We kind of kept a continuity that way, Henry. If you had a formal group, it's going to come and go, come and go. With our friends like Leo who were with us through the whole thing, they were always there. We explored, you know, an association.

Dr. Dethloff: A formal association.

Mr. Herring: But we never really did that.

Dr. Dethloff: Let me ask you now when, say '72, when these new oceanographic laboratories and this kind of thing were beginning to move in, did you sense a different complexion or a different presence here in the Gulf Coast community?

Mr. Seal: Let's say there [was] a great deal of relief.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes, I'm sure of that.

Mr. Seal: Stennis kept informing the public, "I'm working hammer and tong. And while the primary mission is over with, we are going to get a diversification of stuff out there." And they've got a diversification of stuff out there.

When the oceanography deal came to pass we encountered tremendous resistance up in the Maryland, D.C. and Virginia [areas]. Two reasons, one of which it was going to be pulling it out of there, and the second is the press was raking us over the coals again about "You don't want to go down there in the swamps" and all that stuff. What we did, we arranged with the help of NASA to get a planeload of people to go up there on two different occasions, each one of them was from a different segment of the economy. They might have had doctors, school teachers, bankers, construction people and all that to go up there and meet for two or three days with any

of those people who were going to be asked to transfer. So they could come in and have a dialogue and get a better feeling from these. We in the bank, I think, subscribed to eight hundred [copies of the local] newspaper, had the local paper sent up there to something like eight hundred people for a solid month so they could read firsthand what the media was saying on the local level and what was taking place down here, good and bad.

Dr. Dethloff: That was good. That's smart.

Mr. Seal: They tell us that that had an impact on the folks up there. A lot of them came down and when they saw the area, "OK, we'd like to stay." And there were some that came and didn't want to stay. Again, I don't know whether we better put this in there but, Mack, if I remember probably the most noticeable resistance we had was from colored people who didn't know what they were going to be encountering down here.

Dr. Dethloff: Oh, yes.

Mr. Seal: They were scared. They had read so damn much about Mississippi Ku Klux and all that crap, you know.

Dr. Dethloff: Segregation.

Mr. Seal: I would say there was a noticeably higher group of them that were more concerned than anyone else.

But the move went off, and an awful lot of them came down, liked it, and are still staying, still here.

Mr. Herring: A lot of those people retired here; in fact, most of them retired here when they reach their retirement age.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes, that's a good commentary.

Mr. Seal: But the diversifications that have taken place out there are good for the area. You are now not on such a feast-or-famine basis where we don't have to be concerned when the program to get to the moon is over with, you see.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes, when a program ends or when the shuttle ends or something like that.

Mr. Seal: Well, you know the ASRM will come into place then. So I would say in retrospect and from a local citizen and businessman's point of view, it has been a very successful marriage.

Dr. Dethloff: Good.

Mr. Seal: And the benefits economically are forty fold.

Dr. Dethloff: What about state of mind, attitude? Do you see a difference in the people now than probably would have been here thirty or forty years ago had it not been for its presence?

Mr. Seal: Well, the war brought a significant change to the area that tempered this.

Dr. Dethloff: OK, I'm glad you mentioned that.

Mr. Seal: All that stuff I told you came in here, just hundreds, maybe thousands of those people are still here. Camp Shelby, they say, had ninety thousand troops up there [during World War II]. That's [just] sixty-five miles up the road. [They and their families were exposed to the Coast while they were stationed there.]

Dr. Dethloff: Now, you had already gotten through that.

Mr. Seal: I told you I grew up and was raised in Hancock County, Bay St. Louis, all my life. When I left to go to the war in 1942, Bay St. Louis had about four thousand people in it. I could have walked down the streets of Bay St. Louis---I was a boy of seventeen, eighteen at the time---and I could call the names of two thousand people. I might not know they were Mack Herring, but I'd know it was a Herring.

Dr. Dethloff: Sure.

Mr. Seal: I knew if it was a Labat or a Ladner, something like that. At least two thousand out of the four thousand that I knew because they had all been there a long time. What we suffered through the Depression, essentially all we had in Bay St. Louis was the L&N Railroad and the two oyster and shrimping factories there. They canned oysters part of the time and shrimp part of the time and vegetables part of the time. That's about all we had there in the way of payroll. We use to say we lived off of each other.

When I came back after the war [and after three more years in college], there was just hundreds of people; I didn't know who they were, they had moved in during that period. The impact would have been significantly different if we hadn't gone through what we went through then.

Dr. Dethloff: Sure you did. Well, that's good; I'm glad you said that because I hadn't really thought of that or recognized that.

Well, I don't want to keep you any longer, but it's been a great interview and I appreciate the time.

Mr. Seal: Well, we're looking forward to this. I was telling Mack that they couldn't have got a better man to put this thing together because he's been here almost since day one.

Mr. Herring: It's been fun.

Mr. Seal: He's been through it, seen good days and the bad days, and he's seen every phase of it – from going out there on the carriers picking up the astronauts and everything else. He's been around here long enough that he knows the good and the bad of the public, too. He's a separate part of it. I don't know of anything else.

Dr. Dethloff: Well, if you think of something tell Mack and Mack will pass it on to me, I'm sure. What I really wanted, and I think I've gotten, was just sort of the impression, and the war changes were significant. I had not gotten that so far into the picture. I wondered, in fact, if the impact of the new complex would have made much difference in the community, but apparently it did in terms of more solid base but not in terms of---

Mr. Seal: Well, let's say this: in Pearl River County you would get a totally different reflection from someone if you talk to them up there, because they didn't participate in what we did with the military installations. They didn't participate in what we participated in with the industrial [complexes that were built in the Coast counties and the companies that have come in]. [Picayune is] primarily a forest products community and a farming community. So the missile program---Mack can show you the numbers---more people ended up working in the missile complex back in the Apollo days out of Pearl River County, particularly Picayune, than Bay St. Louis, Pass Christian, Long Beach, Gulfport, or Slidell. Now, that number is not that overwhelming now. I'd say the Coast has got as many as they've got.

Mr. Herring: That's right.

Mr. Seal: Initially more people lived up there. It's thirteen miles away and the Bay is nineteen miles away. Waveland wasn't quite that far.

Dr. Dethloff: And, too, the transportation has improved a lot, the roads.

Mr. Seal: Well see, one of the things we did as soon as they got cranked up out there was to start working on the highway to four-lane that road from Bay St. Louis to the site. [The highway department] dug us around forever on that. Then I called a meeting in the bank and had the mayors of every town in Hancock and Harrison counties and the board of supervisors, the chancery clerks and the sheriffs and all come to that meeting. When John Smith, he was the

highway commissioner, walked in there, and we must have had fifty people in there. [When he saw that cross section of people I had in there, he just said,] "Ain't no use in having a meeting. We've got the message; we'll start the road." (laughter) So we got four lanes out there. Now, it took us a little bit longer [than we would have liked, but] the time frame as to the firings and the roads completion was about the same].

Mr. Herring: They were pretty close.

Mr. Seal: Pretty close.

Mr. Herring: Pretty close.

Mr. Seal: Now, I've used the first person a lot in here, and I don't like to do that. I mean a lot of this stuff I may be responsible for, but I don't like to take credit for. Give the bank [and other people] credit for it if you are going to give anything, not me.

Dr. Dethloff: I'm not going to single you out.

Mr. Herring: Leo did do a lot, though, Henry, and it was a good marriage.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes, I picked up on that.

Mr. Herring: It was a closeness developed at that period of time.

Mr. Seal: For example, we asked some of them out there, "What do you need." And they would say, "Oh, we need an airport in Hancock County." Well, that airport that's out at Stennis Field now is a direct result of that.

Dr. Dethloff: Of that request, OK.

Mr. Seal: It took a few years to get that on board, but still in all we started working on that probably in '64, '65. Back in those days NASA used these old Martin 404s. The idea was they could get a landing site out there four or five miles away, they would benefit significantly more so than if they had to come and go to New Orleans.

Dr. Dethloff: Yes.

Mr. Seal: The time frame and transportation. So that was part of what we did in that, too.

Mr. Herring: It covered a long thing of houses, apartments and roads, municipal improvements, schools, many things.

Dr. Dethloff: I'm sure.

Mr. Seal: All right. [Well, I've limited my remarks primarily to the era in which Bill Fortune and Jack Balch were the managers at the site. This is not to reflect improperly on Henry Auter, Jerry Hlass or Roy Estess, as those are more recent times which we were not asked to comment on.]

Mr. Herring: It's interesting reliving some of these times.

Dr. Dethloff: Thank you very much.

(end of the interview)